



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: November 16, 2021

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Special Projects Division, Community Development Department

SUBJECT: State Street Advisory Committee Update

RECOMMENDATION: That Council:

- A. Expand the list of elements to be studied in the State Street Master Plan to include parking, stormwater management, sustainability, infrastructure, and plan implementation and phasing, as recommended by the State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC); and
- B. Receive an update on the State Street Master Plan and process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On July 20, 2021, City Council appointed three Council Members, one Planning Commissioner, one Historic Landmarks Commissioner, three members representing property or business owners, seven at-large members, and two alternates to the State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC). The SSAC is tasked with guiding the production of a State Street Master Plan (SSMP), including providing input and recommendations for various elements of the SSMP to City Council and other decision-making bodies.

This report contains an explanation of the SSAC and staff's progress to date and discussion of future work efforts, including information sharing and outreach and the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP).

Staff will return to Council regularly to provide updates on the progress of the SSMP and the work efforts of staff and the SSAC.

DISCUSSION:

From July 2020 to February 2021, the State Street Subcommittee met to oversee a public outreach effort to evaluate the future of downtown State Street. On March 9, 2021, City Council adopted the State Street Subcommittee's recommendations to initiate

amendments to the General Plan Circulation Element and other actions necessary to transition to permanent closure of certain blocks of State Street to motor vehicles and other circulation improvements, adopt the vision principles for the master planning process, initiate the planning and processes necessary to prepare a Master Plan for the downtown State Street area, and establish the State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC) to oversee the master planning process. The SSAC was formed on July 20, 2021.

The SSAC will provide significant input and recommendations for the State Street Master Plan (SSMP) to ensure that the SSMP focuses on community place-making and innovative design, fosters a thriving business community, and provides the ability to create an activated, safe, and accessible public space for Santa Barbara residents and visitors alike. The SSMP should create an environment that encourages curiosity, exploration, and the desire for people to linger in the space. The SSMP will include a detailed conceptual layout for the project area and an implementation plan, including an estimated cost for construction and ongoing operations and maintenance. The SSMP will also acknowledge key policy areas and identify any existing plans and policies impacted by the master planning recommendations.

SSAC Meetings:

The SSAC is scheduled to meet on the third Monday of every month. Past meetings have been held on August 11, 2021, September 22, 2021, October 18, 2021, and November 15, 2021. The following provides a summary of the SSAC meetings to date.

August: At the August 11, 2021, meeting, the SSAC appointed Dave Davis as the SSAC Chair and Ken Saxon as the SSAC Vice Chair. Staff provided presentations on the closure of State Street and the recommendations of the State Street Subcommittee.

September: Building on the recommendations of the State Street Subcommittee, SSAC members refined the vision principles and objectives for the SSMP process, which are summarized as follows:

- Create a sense of place for the entire community to enjoy by re-envisioning, enhancing, and effectively managing an exciting, clean, thriving, and engaging public space in downtown Santa Barbara.
- Reimagine how people of all abilities travel through and experience downtown.
- Identify solutions that bring vitality to the State Street business community while also attracting local residents and tourists who, in turn, invest in our community.
- Emphasize experiential and outdoor uses of underutilized space.
- Learn from the past and take a holistic approach to evaluating transportation, housing, changes to the retail market, shifts in commercial and office space, homelessness, economic development, and the COVID-19 pandemic response.
- Recognize existing conditions and critical infrastructure needs to support a pedestrian-centric and business friendly downtown.

The SSAC discussed the SSMP areas of focus identified by Council and agreed on a master planning roadmap that includes concurrent review of the interim management and SSMP scoping efforts. This allows work on the SSMP to begin earlier in the process and creates opportunities for enhanced iteration between both efforts. Council must substantively review the roadmap in order to assure it meets the City's needs. Staff also provided a Brown Act training to discuss how SSAC members can interact with other members outside of regular SSAC meetings.

October: During the October 18, 2021, SSAC meeting, members elaborated on the SSMP elements identified during the September SSAC meeting to better refine the SSMP scope of work. The October SSAC meeting also included a review of various examples of other master plans and a discussion about the Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

The SSAC discussed approximately 10 examples of promenade master plans from streets around the world. SSAC members expressed interest in using a cohesive design vocabulary, providing civic anchors, creating sidewalk uniformity, and designing an environment with unobstructed storefront views. SSAC members also commented that the SSMP should emphasize a clean, safe, and inviting pedestrian experience, plan for a 24-hour district downtown, focus on local economy and local needs, and be grounded in the uniqueness of the city. The SSAC indicated that the SSMP should include an extensive community engagement process aimed at reaching residents of all ages and inclusive of people living in the South Coast region more broadly.

In addition to the master plan elements that City Council requested be incorporated during the March 9, 2021 Council meeting, the SSAC suggested additional areas of focus, including parking, stormwater/drainage, sustainability infrastructure, and implementation plan and phasing. The comprehensive list is as follows:

- Streetscape design and amenities
- Transportation, circulation, and parking
- Housing and redevelopment influences
- Economic development
- Historic resources
- Equity and accessibility
- Homeless engagement
- Public art
- Operations and maintenance
- Funding strategy
- Sustainability infrastructure
- Stormwater/drainage
- Implementation plan and phasing

November (anticipated): While the October SSAC meeting emphasized scoping for the SSMP, the November 15, 2021, SSAC meeting will focus on the replacement of the Emergency Economic Recovery Ordinance and the RFP for the SSMP. In addition, the

SSAC's Vice Chair will discuss the SSAC's operating principles, including how the committee can best work together. Staff anticipates that the SSAC will adopt a collective set of operating principles during the November SSAC meeting.

From September through November, staff met individually with each SSAC member to better understand the committee members' vision for the future of State Street. During these one-on-one meetings, committee members expressed a common interest in addressing circulation improvements, refining streetscape design, and reviewing private use of public space. Multiple committee members also emphasized the need to enhance operations and maintenance and acknowledged that increased housing stock downtown will be key to the success of the SSMP. The SSAC and staff share a common goal of keeping equity at the forefront of the SSMP outcome.

Looking Ahead

Request for Proposals

Staff will present a draft of the SSMP RFP to the SSAC for their feedback during the November SSAC meeting. Professional services will be required to complete an assessment of existing conditions in the study area, complete technical analyses (e.g., circulation, economic, stormwater), conduct a comprehensive public outreach program, and draft conceptual urban design alternatives for the State Street corridor. These services fall outside of City staff's project management, facilitation, and outreach duties and will supplement interdepartmental efforts already underway.

Staff anticipates issuing the RFP in early 2022. The selection process will likely extend into the second quarter of 2022, at which time staff will return to Council for authorization to award a final contract.

State Street Master Plan Process

Prior to the selection of a consultant, the SSAC will continue to use the vision principles approved by Council on March 9, 2021, as the basis for the SSMP's overall visioning. The SSAC will discuss a set of values for downtown that embody State Street's distinctive, unique characteristics and can be championed by City Council and the SSAC.

During this time, City staff from multiple departments will make presentations to educate and inform members of the SSAC on topics such as circulation, outdoor dining, and public safety. The goal of these sessions is to provide SSAC members with a foundational understanding of the various SSMP topic areas and to educate SSAC members on existing City programs and work efforts. These meetings, prior to the onboarding of a consultant, will aid the SSMP process by identifying strengths in the downtown area and opportunities for improvement that the SSMP can address.

Interim Operations and Testing Phase

Replacement of the Emergency Economic Recovery Ordinance marks the beginning of a new interim operational phase for State Street that will continue through the adoption and implementation of the SSMP. This transitional period provides an opportunity to investigate design concepts and ideas that will inform the final recommendations of the SSMP. Over the next six months, staff will work with the SSAC to provide input on aesthetics and identify elements of the streetscape to either keep or reimagine. The testing phase also creates opportunities for evaluating various place making strategies, such as art installations, play spaces, and public events, and determining whether they should be included in the SSMP.

Information Sharing and Outreach

As part of the master planning process, the SSMP consultant will collaborate with staff and the SSAC to conduct a robust public outreach and engagement effort. Staff envisions that this effort will engage community members across the city and throughout the South Coast region and may include public outreach meetings during several stages of the master planning process. Staff will also work to identify future engagement opportunities at community events, and provide English and Spanish language versions of outreach materials through all media.

Prior to hiring the SSMP consultant, staff will attend stakeholder meetings and engage with community groups to provide regular updates, share information regarding the project's process and timeline, and encourage broader participation in future outreach efforts. Staff will also update the public on the SSMP's progress through the City's communication channels and community events.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

The State Street Master Plan, advisory committee facilitation, and the future associated capital improvement project(s) require staffing, professional services, and Capital Improvement Plan funding. The State Street Master Planner, a newly created position in the Community Development Department, was hired at the end of August 2021, and the recruitment for the State Street Project Planner position is currently underway.

Staff will return to Council in mid 2022 with a recommended proposal from the RFP solicitation process. In addition to changes in State Street's physical design and/or construction of additional public space enhancements, State Street's management, operations, and programming should be considered. Staff will review potential funding sources, including grant opportunities, to assist in this effort.

PREPARED BY: Tess Harris, State Street Master Planner

SUBMITTED BY: Elias Isaacson, Community Development Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office